

(Baker Thomas)
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THE
EXPEDITION
AGAINST
ROCHEFORT

Fully STATED and CONSIDERED.

IN A
LETTER

To the RIGHT HONOURABLE the

AUTHOR
OF THE

CANDID REFLEXIONS

ON THE

REPORT

OF THE

GENERAL OFFICERS, &c.

By a COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

D U B L I N :

Printed for P. WILSON in *Dame-street*, and S. SMITH
in *Essex-street*, over-against the *Bridge*, Booksellers,

M DCC LVIII.

THE
EXPEDITION
AGAINST
ROCHAMBEAU

By the Staff and Command.



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Printed for P. W. in London, and S. Smith
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1790.



A

LETTER, &c.

SIR,



YOU may, perhaps, be a little surpris'd at receiving a Letter from me : Persons of my Description are not easily found in the Circle of your Acquaintance, and you will be puzzled to guess my Name ; but no Matter what is my Name, or what my Acquaintance with you : I might as well ask who that Friend in the Country was to whom you have thought fit to address your Letter. I have lived many Years among those who are called Country Gentlemen, and never found that you had a single Friend among them ; they knew you too well : Let us cease therefore to enquire who was your Correspondent, either when you wrote your own, or when you receive this Letter. We both have our Reason for the manner of Address.

You will wonder, perhaps, by what Means I have traced this Performance Home to you. Whatever I am I claim no Title, I form no Pretensions to superior Sagacity, or to a more extensive Intelligence, than

others who bear the same Character, which I, perhaps, assume; but the Tree is known by its Fruits, and the Piece often betrays the Workman. Whether the Performance is of the Hand of the great Master himself, or whether it has only been sketched out by him, and work'd up by some inferior Artist, I am not Connoisseur enough to determine, but I know the School. The World was enriched last Winter with so many * *Tests*, and so many other curious Pieces in the same Taste, that it is impossible not to find out the Hands: To you therefore I address myself, as to the great Fountain and Source, without considering whether you have conveyed your Poison through your own masterly Pen, or transfused it into the Quill of some less noble, tho' still perhaps truly noble, Disciple.

Your Appearance on this Occasion justifies the Advice you give to your Friend in the 43d Page of your great Work. *Imagine specifically what is most agreeable to common Sense, and then do not be surprised at finding the Event diametrically opposite to it.* In the Name of that Common Sense, what have you, or any of your Faction, to do, in being the Partizans of those Persons who are the Objects of that Report, whose Unpopularity might, for a Time perhaps, have eclipsed even yours, *unless* you were originally a Party in their Offence, and from thence are become bound to be a Party in their Justification. Those who think you have a Right to the Attribute of Common Sense, must be persuaded that you are involved in this unfortunate Description. Mankind, indeed, had heard of the extraordinary Assiduity with which you attended the General in Ch—f, from the Moment of his Return, to that of his Trial; and that you was employed in the arduous Business of drawing up his Defence: Yet they were disposed to hope, that this proceeded only from the Warmth of Friendship, and if your Discre-

* A Weekly Paper wrote against Mr. PITT.

ion suffered in the Opinions of the over-prudent, you was recompensed by the Honour which was reflected on your Humanity. Why then would you not suffer it to rest on a Foundation so advantageous to you? Why would you confirm the Imputations which Mankind, had with too much Appearance of Plausibility, thrown out upon you, that you and *yours* were the real Authors of that disgraceful Disappointment which the Nation so deeply feels and resents, and that the Generals who have hitherto born the Infamy, were but the Puppets which you and *yours* have actuated.

You say, Page the 29th. "The Unpromisingness of this Expedition was not judged of only by the Event, but Numbers here, on knowing its Destination for the Coast of *France*, and the Constitution of Things in those Parts, made even no Merit of *pronouncing boldly*, that *nothing would*, or could be done by that grand Armada." Once more in the Name of Common Sense, why do you, of all Men living, bring this Circumstance back to People's Memory. It was well observed at the Time, and did not pass without the natural Comment, that a certain Sett of Men, not famous for their extensive Knowledge, did, even long before the Squadron failed, declare publickly, that *wheresoever* was its Destination, *nothing would* be done by it. Mankind were astonished at the *Boldness* with which this was pronounced. They proceeded so far as to draw from this *Boldness* a very ill Omen of the Success. They went still farther; for to this were entirely owing those Suspicions, or as you say Page 9th, "those treasonable Insinuations, that a Tenderness for *H———* might occasion an Armament to be sent out with Intimations, properly given, that nothing being done would not be the most displeasing Thing imaginable." They observed, that the Persons who thus *pronounced* with so much *Boldness*, were the same, who, by their private Intrigues and Cabals, had a few Months before thrown the Affairs of the

King and Kingdom into so much Confusion; and it seemed no great Refinement in Politicks to suppose that the same Influence which enabled them then to put a Stop to all Publick Business, might still subsist to such a Degree, as would blast the Expedition; for they knew very well, as you say, Page 7th, "The Envy of some, who opposed the present Minister's Rise to Power, would be carried to such treasonable Lengths, as secretly to thwart and countermine his Operations." Has the Event proved that they were mistaken in this Apprehension? Or will this Book of yours prove it?

You tell us, Page the 21st, "That his Royal Highness the Duke greatly desired and pressed this Measure, in Hopes of its making a powerful Diversion;" and you refer us as for a Voucher to the *Enq.* Page 20." I have read that Page in the *Enquiry* again and again, and I find nothing to warrant such an Assertion; I see, indeed, in that Page, that Sir J. Ligonier informs the Commander in chief of the Land Forces, what was one Point in the King's View in this Measure, "that it was to create a Diversion in Favour of his R. H. and the K. of *Prussia*, and that the K. of *Prussia* desired and pressed this *very* Measure:" But I find no Intimation that it was the Duke's Desire. I find no Reason to suppose that the Plan had been communicated to him, or approved by him, much less recommended or pressed by him for Execution. I most heartily wish it had; for however widely you and I might differ in our Reasons, we shall both agree in one Conclusion, That a Plan approved and recommended by his R. H. would not have so shamefully failed without any Attempt to execute it.

You tell us, Page 7. that on the Return of the Fleet, "Some merely guided by private Attachments, or Prejudices in Favour of the Projectors, or at least the principal Promoter of the Attempt, extolled it to the Skies, and that on the other hand
" others,

" others, *perhaps*, influenced by Considerations of the
 " like private Nature, by Pique, Prejudice, or En-
 " vy, treated the whole Plan as chimerical, crude,
 " indigested, both in the Projection and Appoint-
 " ment of the Execution, from which no better, or
 " other Success, could be expected than what befel
 " it. That *the whole of it* was the Scheme of a Man
 " who wanted to value himself upon what he did not
 " understand, and who, rather than do nothing,
 " would do something which was worse than no-
 " thing." One should have supposed that an Author
 of *Candid Reflexions* would at least have taken Care to
 steer between these two partial Opinions, which you
 yourself represent as the Extreme on either Side. And
 yet there is not a Line in your whole candid Perform-
 ance, which does not tend to support this Virulence
 against the Minister.

But tho' you have undertaken to attack, I shall not
 undertake to defend him. I am not commissioned to
 it: I am not sufficiently apprised of those Facts which
 justify the Plan of the Expedition; but what I under-
 take to prove is, that you have no Facts, or at least
 you produce none, on which it ought to be condemn-
 ed. Prejudiced, doubtless, I am, and Prejudice will
 insinuate itself into the Mind of every Disputant, and
 every Reader. You think, for Instance, not only
 that the Generals who commanded the Expedition are
 to be justified *in having done no more*, but that they
 are in some Degree blameable *for having done so much*,
 for the Plan was wild, chimerical, and absurd. You
 are satisfied from the Reputation of the Generals, that
 if the Fault had not lain in the Plan, there could have
 been no Failure in the Execution. I, on my Part,
 am persuaded that a Plan (no Matter who projected it)
 approved on the utmost Deliberation by His Majesty,
 and unanimously approved by his Privy-Council, un-
 dertaken on a full Examination of Facts, by these ve-
 ry Generals, without Protest or Remonstrance, ap-
 proved and desired by the King of *Prussia* (for the

King of *Prussia*, we find, *Enq.* p. 20, desires and presses this very Measure) and prepared under the immediate Inspection of Sir *John Ligonier*, then, as well as now, Commander in Chief of the King's Forces, could not be a Project so totally repugnant to common Sense, as you chuse to represent it. These, indeed, are Names which make a different Impression on you and me. Your Opinion of his ****, or at least your Representation of him, is perhaps apt to vary with Circumstances. When he submits to be directed by you and yours, he is every Thing that is great and noble: But if he displeases you or yours, we need go no farther for your Sentiments than to that famous Manuscript, which has been, so busily, and yet so cautiously handed about, wherein he is represented as deceiving the whole World, exposing his favourite Son, as betraying the Safety of his E——l Territories, the Possessions of his Subjects, the Honour of his Arms, his Family, and his Name, for the Sake of preserving his private Treasures, and avoiding the Expence of an Army necessary for the Defence of his Country, which he so often and so solemnly had declared was an effective Army, and yet in Fact never subsisted hardly even upon Paper. How false this Assertion was, subsequent Events have proved. As to the King of *Prussia* we all know how much his military Skill has been, with great Uniformity, derided by you and your favourite Heroes: A Man wild, impetuous, impracticable, ignorant of the Art of War, and as unqualified to be a General as Mr. *Pitt* is to be a Minister. The present Commander in Chief of the *British* Troops we know too, is no Favourite with you and yours. The People of this Country have indeed long considered him as the first Soldier, tho' till lately a very subordinate Officer in the Service. They will never forget the Services he has done this Country. *British* Armies, with their General, saved from instant Destruction, by his superi-

and you might be surprised to find how much they have done

or Skill in his Profession, by his Capacity to see, and his Readiness and Alertness to seize an Advantage over his Enemy, will ever endear him to the Friends of *England*, and the Royal Family. But perhaps this very Merit, which will never be forgot by his grateful Country, will never be forgiven by Individuals.

Page 11th and 12th, your first Objection seems to be the Constitution of the Board of Enquiry. You adopt an Expression, which perhaps you first suggested to the General, *That it was a Proceeding not quite common*. And you suggest your Doubts about the Legality, as well as Propriety, of such an Enquiry. I will answer this fully, at least *ad Hominem*. The first Institution of a Board of General Officers for the Purpose of enquiring into the Conduct of a Commander, took Place under the Auspices of his Royal Highness *William Duke of Cumberland*, at that Time Commander in Chief of the *British* Forces: An Officer was judged, *condemned*, and ruined by that Board of Enquiry, *without any other Trial*. Would you have any other Answer to this Objection? Or shall I comment upon it? Or make Comparisons? But if ever such an Enquiry was right and proper, it was so in the present Case, where the Parties to be tried had agreed upon a total Suppression of Evidence. In the very Council of War, which unanimously resolved to do nothing, far from a Desire to state the Evidence on which they proceeded, and their respective Opinions upon that Evidence, which one would think natural to every one who was solicitous for his Honour and Justification, the first Thing resolved on was to take no Minutes of Opinions, and that even the Informations of the Persons examined should not stand Part of the Minutes, so as to be *transmitted to any Person*; Enq. p. 10. Here then, as far as in them lay, was a total Suppression of Evidence.

But,

But, says one of the Generals, I do not conceive myself answerable for an Opinion given at a Council of War : Therefore it may be urged why are Minutes of what passes there necessary ? I confess I am sorry to find this Doctrine so much received among Officers, that they are not responsible for Opinions given at a Council of War, because the Nature of Mankind is too apt to persuade him, that there can be no Faults where there is not a Possibility of Punishment. I therefore will never admit this Doctrine in the Extent it is often urged. Criminally responsible for his Opinion no Officer can be, because it is not an Offence against any Article of War ; But what then ? Is the Opinion, on the Evidence on which it is founded, to be suppressed ? And is not an Officer responsible to his King and Country in any other Place than a Court Martial ? God forbid that such a Doctrine should be established.

A Court Martial which judges upon the Letter of the Law, upon the strict Words of Articles of War, or a penal Act of Parliament, may acquit of capital Crimes a Conduct which nevertheless evinces the Officers, who have been guilty of it, to be unfit for any future Command. It is the Words of positive Laws, which in a free Country are to make Men liable to Punishments ; but it is the Prerogative of the Crown to judge, upon the whole of the Circumstances, who are fit to continue in its Service, and to command its Armies.

But you are not satisfied with the Personages appointed to form this Board, and in an Ironical Paragraph, Page 11, you insinuate how unfit they were to judge of such a Matter, by telling us what Qualifications were necessary to such Judges. Before I consider their Qualifications, let me ask you a Question, Who do you think appointed them ? The King, you will doubtless say : It was his Prerogative. But who do you think recommended them ? I ask this of you, because I am persuaded *your Intelligence on this Head*

is better than mine. But I will tell you who, I verily believe, did not recommend them. I believe Mr. *Pitt* did not, and the World, when they read those respectable Names, will not be of Opinion, that, considering the known and declared Friendships, Connections and Attachments of the *Majority of them*, they were precisely *the three Men* on whose Decision Mr. *Pitt* would willingly rest a Point, which many of his Enemies, and you at the Head of them, endeavoured to make a Point, on which his Capacity as a Minister was to be determined. Whatever Qualities they had, or had not, to fit them for the Judges in such an Enquiry, they certainly had no Partiality in Favour of the Projectors of, and against those who ought to have executed the Plan of the Expedition. As to their Capacity and Knowledge of Service, when I consider and contemplate the glorious List of Heroes, to whose Command the Army of this Country has been for so many Years confided, I confess myself at a Loss, thro' the infinite Variety of Choice, to point out the Persons whose consummate Knowledge might give the greatest Weight to their Decision: Yet I say, and I say it seriously, that if Experience, such as the Armies of this Country can give, founded upon strong manly Sense, an active Spirit, and a penetrating Sagacity, can qualify a Man to judge in a Question of this Sort, it was to be found among those who sat at this Board of Enquiry.

Before I proceed to consider the Conduct of the Generals, &c. I shall follow you in some of your previous Steps, tho' they are not Steps in which I delight to walk. In order to form a Judgment on the Practicability of the Measure, you are sensible a Question will occur to every Man; What was the Force which our Troops were likely to meet at, and after their Descent? To make this favourable to your Point, you are pleased to avail yourself, p. 13, 14, of Accounts, which you think fit to inform us were circulated in *Holland*, and other neutral Countries, of
the

the State of the Troops of *France*, which were said to amount to 300,000. The Memorial delivered in by Authority makes them something less than 200,000. You say you don't dispute the Truth of this Account, but you insinuate the general Opinion to be, that they are above 300,000 Regulars. But the military Lists of *France*, you say, are open, and it would be unpardonable not to have a thorough Knowledge of that Point. But pray, Sir, how is one to attain that thorough Knowledge? Do you expect a Certificate from the Muster-Master-General of *France*, (if there be such an Officer) or what other Information do you demand? The best that can be obtained, unless from immediate Authority of the King of *France*, (and perhaps the best, even without that Exception) is what the Privy Council had before them. Look into the Memorial. Can you have a more exact Account, than the very Corps of which the Army consists; their Numbers in Time of Peace; their different Augmentations since the War commenced, and their present Destination? How does it appear that the Memorial is not taken from those very military Lists to which you appeal? But the Point was too strong against you to be suffered to remain in full Force, and therefore you endeavour to contradict particular Accounts, delivered by Authority, by vague Reports, which you are pleased to say were current in other Countries. How such Reports came to your Ears I cannot imagine! I believe you are the first Man of Business who ever attempted to pass such a Report on the World. But that you may make as free with my Intelligence as I have done with yours, I will tell you a Report which I have heard, and I fancy from rather better Authority than your *Dutch* Report. That so far were the *French* from having the Troops on the Coast which you insinuated, and which I think, if all collected together, as in your different Accounts, would amount to about 100,000 Regulars, besides 100,000 Militia, there

to amount to 100,000 Militia, there were

were actually but 4000 regular Troops at the Time our Fleet came upon the Coast, for the Defence of all the Garrisons and Outworks in and near *Port l'Orient, la Rochelle, and Rochefort*, and that the smaller Division of these was at *Rochefort*. I will now communicate another Report; You, as well as the Generals, seem to stand in great Awe of a Name so dignified as a Marshal of *France*. You speak, in different Places, of the Alertness of the Enemy on this Occasion, and the proportionable Resistance which our Troops must undoubtedly have met with if they attempted to land. Yet what was the real Case: The old Marshal, worn out with Infirmities, *ne faisoit que pleurer*. Such were the Accounts the *French* themselves gave of him. He considered all as lost, the Moment the Attack was pointed at *Rochefort*, and far from making Dispositions to dispute the landing, he passed the Hours in Tears, and in writing Expresses to his Court.

Page 17. You pretend not fully to understand the Meaning of the Term *Coup de Main*. You attempt Definitions of it; from its vague and uncertain Import you would insinuate that it was hardly understood by our Generals what they were to do, but you argue as if by a *Coup de Main*, was meant, only a Surprise, and that if the Opportunity of a Surprise was lost, the whole Prospect of Success was over. I shall enter into no Scholastick Dispute about the Definitions of Terms. I will only say, that it is very apparent, that the Term *Coup de Main* was not used to express the taking *Rochefort* by *Surprise only*, but that it was to be attacked in every other Way, except the opening Trenches, and erecting Batteries.

In the Advice delivered by Sir *John Ligonier*, whose Experience in the Art of War, Sir. *J. Mordaunt* says, will vindicate any Officer guided by his Authority, I find this Paragraph, *Enq.* p. 22. "As for a *Coup de Main*, it may perhaps succeed *best* at your coming up, as the Enemy may be in a great Hurry, Surprise, and Consternation, at such an unexpected Visit;

“ Visit, and not have Time to make his Dispositions.
 “ But if that is not thought proper, it it may *succeed*
 “ *as well after the Place has been thoroughly reconnoitred,*
 “ and you have fixed the Spots where you design to
 “ make the greatest Efforts, and if the Enemy see
 “ any Preparations for a regular Attack, they will
 “ less expect a *Coup de Main*. *Bergen-op-Zoom* was
 “ taken by a *Coup de Main*, after a long Siege. St.
 “ *Philip's* was taken by Scaling Ladders, and a *Coup*
 “ *de Main*, tho' the Garrison was 3000 strong, after
 “ a Siege of 56 Days : The Necessity of dividing a
 “ small Garrison in a Place of such Circumference as
 “ *Roche fort*, may facilitate the Success of a bold At-
 “ tempt.” If Sir *John Mordaunt* really thought Sir
J. Ligonier to be a Man of that Experience in the Art
 of War which he describes him to be ; if he really
 meant to guide himself by the whole of his
 Advice in the Execution of the Plan, and not to ex-
 cuse himself, only by selecting certain Parts of it from
 others which were explanatory, and with which they
 were connected, how come he so totally to have for-
 got this Part of it, which, if any Doubt had subsisted,
 would have explained what was intended by a *Coup de*
Main, and to remember only the Recommendation
 to secure a Communication for a Retreat ? nay of
 what Sort was that Communication to be ? See the
 same Paper, *Eng.* p. 21. “ Supposing the Troops
 “ landed, it must be left to the Consideration of the
 “ Generals whether they should not march with pro-
 “ per Precautions *directly* to *Roche fort*, to prevent
 “ any Succours being thrown into the Place, at the
 “ same Time that the Marines should be employed
 “ for making a good Intrenchment for the Security
 “ of the Stores to be landed from time to time, as
 “ well as of a Retreat in case of Necessity.” Here
 then vanishes at once all that Part of your Argument,
 and of the General's Defence, which is founded upon
 the Plan of Attack, being intended to take the Place
 only by Surprise. Here vanishes all the Weight which

was

was to be derived from the Advice of Sir *John Ligonier*, with regard to the Necessity of Fort *Fouras* being taken before the Troops were landed, in order to secure a Retreat. Sir *J. Ligonier* supposes the Troops first to land, and then to throw up an Intrenchment, in order to secure a Retreat, and to receive and preserve the Stores as they were landed.

Another Argument, which you endeavour to force into your Service, is the Countenance given by the Concurrence of the Sea-Officers, to the Opinion of that Council of War which determined to do nothing against *Rochefort*. Let us see what Sir *Edward Hawke* says on the Subject: In his Letter to Mr. Secretary *Pitt*, *Eng.* p. 101, are these Words: “ We (meaning the Seamen) assented to the Reasons for not attempting to take *Rochefort* by Escalade, in Confidence of *their* (meaning the Land Officers) Judgment and Knowledge in *their own* Profession; but I and every one else agreed in Opinion, that the Landing could be effected.” What therefore is the Inference to be drawn from hence, but this: The Seamen were persuaded they could effect the whole of their Duty; they could land the Troops: As to what the Troops could do when landed, it was not their Province to judge: It was the Business of the Generals to determine; and they signed their Names to the Council of War, not in Testimony of their own Opinion, but in Deference to the Opinion of those whose Province it was to judge and determine. That is, they acted consistently with the King’s Instructions, to live in Harmony with the Land Officers, and not to give Occasion of Discontent, by intermeddling, protesting, and remonstrating in what was not their Province; but so weary does Sir *Edward Hawke* appear to have been of these Councils of War, that when Sir *J. Mordaunt* applied to him, to call one, to consider of the Return of the Fleet, Sir *Edward* refused, alledging that the Seamen had nothing to do with it; it was a Land Operation only. *Eng.* p. 35.

You

You are pleased to object to the Testimony and Opinion of Colonel *Clerk* as deserving less Weight, because it was upon his Representation that the Attempt on *Rochfort* was first thought of; and he, you think, is bound in Honour to support the Practicability, that is, the Honour of his own Plan: But you think, at the same Time, that the highest Credit is to be given to the very Names of the Officers of which the Council of War was composed, forgetting that they are the very Parties to be tried, and that their Testimony is brought forth for their own Condemnation or Acquittal.

I have thus endeavoured to demolish that Outwork of Prejudice with which you have endeavoured to intrench yourself: So far goes the *Coup de Main*, and now if you please we will begin the Attack in Form. The Report of the Board of General Officers, which was the Ground-work of your Letter, must likewise be so of mine. You have concluded, and I will begin with it; for the Plan of that Report will give a Regularity to our Arguments; and as that has considered every Part of the Conduct of the Generals, it will bring on all that can be urged for or against them from the Evidence hitherto made public in a regular Method.

The first Article of the Report is, "It appears
 " that one Cause of the Expedition having failed, is
 " the not attacking *Fort Fouras* by Sea, at the same
 " Time that it would have been attacked by Land
 " agreeable to the first Design, which certainly must
 " have been of the greatest Utility towards carrying
 " your Majesty's Instructions into Execution; It was
 " at first resolved by Sir *Edward Hawke* (*Tbierry* the
 " Pilot of the *Magnanime* having undertaken the safe
 " Conduct of a Ship to *Fort Fouras* for that Purpose)
 " but afterwards laid aside upon the Representation of
 " Vice Admiral Knowles, that the *Barfleur*, the Ship
 " designed for that Service, was on Ground at the
 " Distance of between Four or Five Miles from the
 " Shore,

“ Shore, but as neither Sir *Edward Hawke* nor the
 “ Pilot could attend to give any Information upon
 “ that Head, we cannot presume to offer a certain
 “ Opinion thereupon.”

This is the First Article of the Report, which, after having told us, p. 37. that it is a most admirable Piece, calculated, as if by Compromise, neither to acquit or condemn, you tell us, p. 38. shews that at least so far the Commanders are in no Fault. If they are in no Fault they are acquitted, and I am ready to allow, that so far as this Article goes, the Commanders of the Land Forces are acquitted; but if you will argue farther, that all the Commanders who were to conduct the Expedition were in no Fault, especially if you insist as you do, p. 38. “ that it appears plain, that *Fouras* was inaccessible to Shipping, notwithstanding the Pilot *Thierry*’s Promise, which it should seem he could not make good, I totally deny your Conclusion.” A Child in Argument must see the Fallacy of it. If the Fact was clear that *Fouras* was inaccessible to Shipping, how comes it to pass that the not attacking it is given as a Cause of the Failure of the Expedition? No positive Opinion was given you say upon it. Why was it not, and where was the Necessity of leaving this Point open for farther Enquiry after the Return of Sir *Edward Hawke* and the Pilot, if it already appeared to be a Measure impracticable? But *impracticable* is the Word, and every Thing is to be, from Beginning to End, pronounced impracticable. I say that it appears to be far from certain, that *Fort Fouras* was inaccessible to Shipping, and yet the Board of Officers did right to give no Opinion, because Sir *Edward Hawke* and *Thierry*, Parties principally concerned, had not been heard. I will enter farther into the Consideration of this Matter, for some Conclusion may be drawn from it; it is a Thing so astonishing, that (as you say) *a Set of Gentlemen, of untainted Character, and trusted with the Arms of their Country, could be so*

grossly wanting to its Honour and their own, as to return back with so bad a Grace, that it behoves us to throw all the Light on this Transaction, which any Circumstance can produce, even though the Land Officers are not concerned in the Event. But whoever is to blame, the Nation is concerned in the Event; for they bear the Loss and the Infamy of the Miscarriage.

It appears from the Evidence of Vice Admiral Knowles, *Enq.* p. 44. that the whole Affair of this Attack upon *Fouras* was delegated by Sir *Edward Hawke* to his Inspection, and that Sir *Edward* had proceeded so far in the Execution of the Plan, as to direct his Secretary to begin an Order to lighten the *Barfleur* for that Purpose. But this was laid aside, upon the Remonstrances of Capt. *Graves* and Vice-Admiral *Knowles*, that the *Barfleur* was aground at between Four and Five Miles Distance from the Shore; that then Sir *Edward Hawke* ordered him to try to carry the Bomb-ketches in, which he did, and run them aground at more than Two Miles and Two Thirds of a Mile Distance from *Fort Fouras*, where they were likely to have been taken by Row-Boats: That then he run the *Coventry* Frigate a-ground Five Times within the Hour, at a greater Distance from the Shore than the Bomb-ketch. That then (and it seems not till then) he sent his Master to sound, and found that at Two Miles Distance from the Fort, there was but Six Foot Water at High Water. All these notable Exploits were performed by Vice-Admiral *Knowles*; the same, who, it is said, advised Sir *Edward Hawke* not even to enter the Road of *Basque*, lest he should be bombarded; the same, one has formerly heard and read of in Courts-Martial; the same, who on a late P——y Enquiry, had the Happiness to boast such peculiar Protection and Countenance from you, Sir; the same, who (as I have heard)

heard) detained the Squadron Two Days in Sight of the *French* Coast, because he had sent away the Pilot, destined to conduct it upon a Chace after a *French* Ship. But I will not recapitulate his Virtues or his Merit. It was upon the Remonstrance of *this* Vice-Admiral, whose Station in Command entitled him at least, to so much Confidence from his superior Officer, that the Resolution to attack *Fort Fouras* by Sea was laid aside. Now, then, let me relate to you the Reasons which induce me to believe, that notwithstanding this Report of Vice-Admiral *Knowles*, *Fort Fouras* was accessible by Sea, though the Vice-Admiral had not the good Fortune to find out the Channel.

In the first Place, then, though I have by no Means that high Opinion of the *French* Wisdom and Ability which you entertain, and on every Occasion extol so highly; yet I do suppose, that in Matters of Defence, they do conduct themselves on Principles similar to those which are adopted by the rest of Mankind. I do suppose, for Instance, that when they build a Fort, it is intended either to defend or offend. *Fouras* was weak to the Land; it stood at the Water's Edge to guard the Channel; it stood even on a Bank which ran into the Water; and as Colonel *Wolfe*, who seems to be the first Officer who thought of reconnoitring it, tells us, *Enq.* p. 30. It had 24 Embrasures to the Water Side. What was the Use of this Fort? Was it to guard a Bank of Sand over which scarce a *Thames* Wherry could pass? If the Guns of no Ship whatever could reach the Fort, could the Guns of the Fort reach any Ship? According to Mr. *Knowles*, there was no Channel at all, or it lay out of Gunshot of the Fort. At two Miles Distance the Vice-Admiral's Master found but six Feet Water at High-Water; at near three Miles Distance the Bomb-Ketch, which drew but eleven Foot Water,

ter, went aground. The *Coventry* Frigate did the same further out than that, and the *Barfleur* at a still greater Distance. Now, though *after* all this Delay, and Hazard to the Ships, that Admiral thought fit to sound, and try the Depth of the Water *at a Distance from the Fort, where no Cannon could reach*; yet it is astonishing to find not a single Proof attempted to be given of the Depth of the Water near the Shore, and within Gunshot of the Fort. Is it impossible then that the Channel, a narrow one, might run in Shore? Is it not demonstrable that it did so, both from the Circumstance of the Thing, and the Evidence of those who knew, and had navigated it? What says *Bonneau*, the Fisherman, examined by General *Conway*, and others, *Enq.* p. 53. There were four Fathom (24 Foot) Water at half Cannon-shot from Fort *Fouras*, a Depth sufficient for a 60 Gun Ship. Now, tho' the Land Officers did not chuse to trust to the Intelligence of a Fisherman for the State of the Fortifications at *Rochefort*, yet it seems to be the best Evidence as to the Depth of the Channel that could have been wished. There was the united Testimony of *Thierry* and *Bonneau*, joined to the Reason of the Thing, that there must be a Channel within Gunshot of the Fort, though the Ships missed the Entrance of it. I might add, that though the Vice-Admiral could not conduct a Ship to the Fort, there were Captains in the Fleet who it seems offered it: Captain *Colby* offered to carry the *Princess Amelia*, *Enq.* p. 30. How then can we unriddle this Mystery, for a Mystery there certainly is? Perhaps it is easier to guess the Solution than to explain it.

From all these Circumstances, I say it is cleat that *Fouras* must be, and was accessible by Sea; That the Board of Officers are therefore justified in the Report, that the not attacking it by Sea appeared to be one of the Causes of the Failure of the

the Expedition. I have said this merely to justify the Report of the Board; for the Conduct of the Generals seems to me so little affected by this Article, and indeed, so totally independant of it, that from this Moment, if you chuse it, I will suppose that *Fouras* was built only to guard a Sand-bank, and that it was inaccessible to every Thing but a Long-boat.

The next Article in the Report is, " That another Cause of the Failure of the Expedition was, that instead of attempting to land when the Report was received on the 24th of *September* from Rear Admiral *Broderick*, and the Captains who had been sent out to sound and reconnoitre, a Council of War was summoned, and held on the 25th, in which it was unanimously resolved not to land, as the Attempt upon *Rochefort* was neither adviseable or practicable. But it does not appear to us that there were then, or at any Time afterwards, either a Body of Troops, or Batteries on Shore, sufficient to have prevented the attempting a Descent, in pursuance of the Instructions signed by Your Majesty. Neither does it appear to us, that there were any sufficient Reasons to induce the Council of War to believe, that *Rochefort* was so far changed in respect to its Strength, or Posture of Defence since the Expedition was resolved on in *England*, as to prevent all Attempts from an Attack upon the Place, in order to burn and destroy the Docks, Magazines, Arsenals, and Shipping, in Obedience to Your Majesty's Command." Is this, Sir, the Part of the Report, which you say is so far from carrying Censure, that the Commanders (I mean the Land Commanders) might even glory in avowing and subscribing to it? Is this the Part *which you say does Honour to their Sense and Obedience*? Let us state it in fewer Words: A Cause of Failure in this Expedition was, that the Generals, instead of landing on the 24th of *September*, when the Report of those sent to recon-

noitre was made, called a Council of War on the 25th, and resolved not to land. Yet there was no Reason which prevented their having landed as they were ordered. Nor do we think the Council of War had any Reason to imagine, that the Situation of *Rochefort* appeared now so different from what it was represented to be when the Expedition was first set on Foot, as to make it impossible to execute their Orders.

If this is Obedience, if this is Matter of Glory to a Soldier, in the Name of Common Sense, what is Disobedience; and what can he do to deserve Shame and Dishonour? Can it be asserted in stronger Terms that the Expedition failed, because the Council of War, *without any Reason to justify such a Resolution*, determined it to be impracticable and unadvisable to execute their Orders. If you say that the Determination does not declare in positive and express Terms, that the Expedition was originally prudent and advisable, you say true: Such a Declaration would have been very unbecoming the Board of Officers to whose Consideration that Question was by no Means referred. They were to consider whether the Officers had sufficient Foundation to justify the Non-execution of their Orders, and they make the proper Answer to such a Question, that from what appears to them, those Officers had not such a sufficient Foundation as could justify them. I dare say they took Care to avoid giving their Opinions on more than was referr'd to them; in so doing they shewed their Capacity, and their Knowledge of their Duty. And yet, notwithstanding their Care to avoid it, an Approbation of the original Plan is most manifestly and necessarily *implied*, in this Decision; for if *Rochefort* was open to attack, no one doubts but it was wise to attempt it; yet with all the Changes which the Generals could prove to have been made in its Strength and Posture of Defence, since the Expedition was first resolved on, it did not appear to be even *now* in such a State as to prevent all Attempts

tempts of an Attack. Yet no such Attempts were made.

But you seem to be so intent on condemning the original Plan, that, like the Council of War, you forgot the Point which ought to be under Consideration, suppose the Plan to be as wild as you represent it: Are the Officers justifiable in their Disobedience of Orders? By no Means. The first Duty of a Soldier is Obedience: Obedience not only to the Command of a superior Officer, but to the State who employs him: His Life is not his own, it belongs to the State. Such are the very Terms of his Service; such the Conditions on which he is maintained by the Publick. If he is ordered to an Attack, he is not to ask whether he can get back, and yet he is to take the best Precautions to enable him to get back. It is as much a Part of his Duty to preserve, as to expose himself, *provided he performs his Orders*. But is a private Officer, or a Collection of Officers in Council (for the Number does not alter their Condition) to say, My Orders are ridiculous, and I will not execute them? Who constituted them Counsellors of State, and submitted the Propriety of their Orders to their Decision?

This is and must be the Case where Orders are express and positive. Where indeed discretionary Orders are given, there arises a Latitude and Power of judging. Such was undoubtedly the present Case. The Generals had discretionary Orders, but what was the Point to be the Subject of their Discretion? Was it whether their original Orders were fit to be executed, supposing the Case to be as represented, when the Orders were given? Undoubtedly not. It had been before determined by the King, that is by the State, that on the apparent State of *Rochefort* it ought to be attacked. They were therefore to use their utmost Efforts to land and attack it. But it was left to their Discretion to desist, if they found by undoubted Proof, that the Case, *as it existed*, was become materially changed from what had

been *represented*. That alone was the Object of their Discretion, and therefore the Board of Officers concluded like Men, knowing the Duty of Soldiers, that those who constituted the Council of War had failed in theirs, for they desisted from the Enterprize without such a material Change of Circumstances appearing. I do not indeed wonder, that on this Occasion you should have been led into an Error. You are so much connected with Soldiers accustomed to assume the Offices of Statesmen, that you have been naturally led to confound their Duty.

Let us examine then on what Foundation the Board of Enquiry have grounded this severe Censure. If *Fouras* could have been attacked by Sea, undoubtedly one or more of the Sea Commanders failed in their Duty. But does it follow, that because the Sea Officers were guilty of a Failure, the Land Officers were justified in their immediate Resolution to go Home again? Undoubtedly not. Was *Fouras* so absolutely necessary, that without an Attack upon it from the Sea, it was impossible to land, and did it, *upon full Enquiry*, appear impracticable to take it by Land without the Assistance of Sea Operations? Neither of these Justifications can the Council of War boast. The Admirals and Captains report Two fit landing Places independant of *Fouras*, *Enq.* p. 15. And as to the taking that Fort by Land without a Sea Operation, it does not appear so much as to have entered into the Heads of any of the Council, even to order it to be reconnoitred with a View of taking it, and making it a Place of Retreat, tho' all the Generals concur that the principal Objection to the Attack at *Rockfort* was the Want of a Place of Retreat; and Sir *John Mordaunt* declares, *Enq.* p. 28. That had Fort *Fouras* been taken, *there would have been great Ease in the Rest of the Enterprize*; surely then, it was the highest Imputation on the Council of War, never to have considered this Point, *till after they had determined* to lay aside the only Measure which made the Fort worth attacking.

But

But to go Step by Step, let us consider the Difficulties which prevented the Attempt to land. Sir *Edward Hawke*, in his Letter to Mr. *Pitt*, *Enq.* p. 101, says, *He, and every one else, were of Opinion, the Landing might be effected.* The Admiral, and reconnoitring Captains, report, *Enq.* p. 102. Two convenient landing Places, where the Transports might come within a Mile and an Half of the Shore, and where no Batteries on the Shore could annoy the landing. Admiral *Broderick* says, *Enq.* p. 45. that the landing was so good, "that he could have got out of the Boats without wetting his Shoes." That no Shot from any Battery could reach the Boats. That Men of War could come within Two Miles. That the Sand Hills were Forty Yards distant from High Water Mark. That the Bomb-Ketches, if they could come near enough, might have been useful to annoy any Troops hid behind the Sand Hills, and p. 44, Admiral *Knowles* says, a Bomb, at an Elevation of Forty Five Degrees, will go Two Miles and Two Thirds."

This Account of the Landing-places in *Chatelaillon Bay*, is not controverted by the General in Chief, or any of the rest of the Council of War. But the Objections they raise are of two Sorts. "Numbers of Troops hid behind the Sand Hills, which might cut off the Parties as fast as they landed: A Difficulty of getting back again to the Ships even when landed, as it was clear from the Evidence of discreet and experienc'd Pilots, that if the Wind blew westerly from the Bay, as there was great Reason to expect it would at that Season, Boats could not come or go to the Ships even for many Weeks together:" As to the Troops hid behind the Sand hills, let us see what Evidence there was of any Number collected for such a Purpose.

In the first Place I must beg Leave to insist, that it became the Generals to give Credit to the Intelligence which they received from the Government, and upon
which

which the Plan of the Expedition was undertaken, till they had sufficient Authority *either from what they saw, or from credible and positive Information* to doubt or disbelieve the Truth of it. Such Facts and Intelligence as they could obtain, they were to believe in Proportion to the Credibility of it, but they were not in Contradiction to the positive Intelligence communicated to them by the Government, to act upon their own Reasoning, as General Conway tells you he did, *Enq.* p. 36, that tho' he knew of no considerable Army in the Field, yet he was persuaded there must be a considerable Number of Men in Rochefort. The positive Intelligence communicated by the Government informed them, that there were in Fact but 10,000 regular Troops to guard a most immense Tract of Coast, furnished with Forts and Fortifications, in each of which there must have been some proportion of regular Troops. A great Number of these were doubtless at Brest. Sir J. Mordaunt in his Defence, *Enq.* p. 13, 14. says he had Intelligence of above 7000 there. And his Reasoning, goes no farther than to say, *Enq.* p. 17. That what seemed Certain on the whole was, that tho' it was Possible there might be no Army assembled to engage them in the Field, it was highly Improbable there was not a good Garrison in Rochefort. Allow for the present that there was; would the Governor of it have deserted his Works and marched into the open Field with a Complement of Troops amounting only to a good Garrison. Troops were to be left within the Walls; there must be more in Fort la Pointe, more in Fort Fouras, and so extensive were the Works at Rochfort and Rochelle, and the Forts dependent on them, all of which were liable to be attacked, that if the whole 10,000 Men, which guarded such a length of Coast, had been assembled in those two Places, it would have been impossible to have spared such a Number as could have marched to the Coast to give a serious Opposition to the Landing. As to the positive Intelligence of Troops assembled,

bled, let us see what it amounts to. Admiral *Bröderick* saw an Army *in the Field*, *Enq.* p. 45, amounting to 400 or 500 Foot and 150 Horse. General *Conway* says, *Enq.* p. 36, that one Prisoner had said there were eleven Battalions, and another seven, but not in the Field but at *Rochelle*; and tho' he paid little Regard to them singly, yet on the whole, he thought there was no room to doubt but there were *some Troops*, *Enq.* p. 31. Captain *Skinner*, of the *Viper* Sloop, told Colonel *Howard* that on *Sunday* or *Monday* he saw a considerable Number of Troops, and that he reckoned eight or nine Pair of Colours *. But whether they were regular Troops, or Troops of the Country, he could not tell, *Enq.* p. 32. And I think Sir *J. Mordaunt* says, that the Prisoners declared there were Troops, *and even named Regiments*, *Enq.* p. 17.

What is there in this Sum Total of Evidence on this Point, to vary the Intelligence given to the Generals before they failed. They were told there were *some Troops*, *Regiments*, and even *Battalions*; but what credible Evidence was there to induce them to suppose they were too numerous for the Troops on board the Fleet to cope with?

But how could our Troops have been landed? In the first Place Admiral *Knowles*, in Concurrence with the Admiral and Captains who went to reconnoitre, “ had assured them there were two Landing-places out of
“ the Reach of any Battery; That the Beach was dry,
“ sandy, and firm, and the Soldier need not have
“ wetted his Shoes in getting out of the Boat; that
“ the Men of War, [which drew from 20 to 30 Foot
“ Water] might have come within two Miles; and
“ tho' the Cannon from them could not annoy the
“ Troops, if there were any behind the Sand Hills,
“ yet the Bomb-Ketches might, which throw a
“ Bomb two Miles and two Thirds; and which, as

* There are three Standards to each Battalion, and a *French* Battalion is generally computed at 500 Men.

“ they drew but eleven Feet Water, might have “ come (probably) as near as the Transports.” So that the Men might have landed under Cover of the Bombs, which, as the Sand Hills were but forty Yards from the Water Edge, must have cleared the Ground for considerably more than a Mile beyond the Sand-Hills.

As to the Number of Troops that could have landed at a Time, it seems astonishing that this should never have been considered by the Generals, I may say, till they wanted an Excuse to come home again. For Col. *Wolfe* deposes, *Eng.* p. 21. That he believes there never was an exact Calculation made how many could have embarked at a Time in the Boats : What a noble Foresight in the Generals ! He thinks, however, that thirty-six Companies of 60 Men, with their Officers, might have embarked at a Time ; in all above Two Thousand and Two Hundred. And how long would it have been before these could have been supported by such another Body ? Would it have been two Hours ? That, certainly, is the very utmost. Hitherto, indeed, the Generals, and their Advocates, have been pleased to calculate the intermediate necessary Time between landing the Detachments, from what would have happened on the turbulent and tempestuous Night of the 28th, when the Sea run so peculiarly high, that the ablest Seamen differed whether they could reach the Land or not : Even then it would have been done in five or six Hours, or not at all. It is most evident, therefore, that in the Course of a Night, between dark and light, the whole Body of Troops on board the Fleet might have been assembled on a dry, sandy, firm Beach, under the Protection of Bomb-Ketches, which would have cleared the Ground for a Mile beyond them : Why then was not this done in the Nights either of the 24th, 25th, 26th, or 27th, during which Time there is no Appearance that the Surf of the Sea would have given any Obstruction.

I may

I may be mistaken in Terms ; I am neither Soldier nor Sailor ; I pretend only to such Knowledge as flows from common Sense and common Reason.

As to the great Difficulties arising from the *Possibility* of a Wind setting in from the Bay, which for six Weeks together might prevent a Communication with the Ships, I must be excused if I lay little Stress upon it; because, tho' this is set forth with all due Magnificence, when it is to justify the Generals in the Non-Obedience of their Orders, and when they did not chuse to land; yet neither this, nor the Terror of Armies behind the Sand-Hills, had the least Influence, when they found themselves disposed to leave the Coast with the Glory of having taken Fort *Fouras*, yet the Difficulties were then greater thro' the tempestuous Weather. You do well to say, that in this the Generals did too much, and it was an *Imprudence*. They did indeed. They did infinitely too little for their Country, but they did infinitely too much for their own Justification. When their Duty, the Execution of their Orders, the Honour and Interest of their Country, call upon them to act, Difficulties are raised as high as Mountains, but they sink instantly to Mole-Hills, or, what is as ridiculous, to Sand-Hills, the Moment it becomes a Consideration, whether it would not be safer for the Generals to do something which might allay the national Clamour against them.

Let us now consider how far they are justified, by what they found, in determining, in Contradiction to what they were ordered, that an Attack upon *Roche-fort* was not to be attempted. In the first Place, I shall take Leave to strip them of that Part of their Defence, which arises totally from their own Misconduct, the Want of having a Place of Retreat. When we are to judge from Events of the Practicability of a Measure, we are to argue from the Case, as it would have stood, if all had been done which could have been done, *Fouras* might have been had for a Place of

of Retreat ; and it is but an unfortunate Slip in the General, who owns, *Enq.* p. 28, That had Fort *Fou-ras* been taken, *there would have been great Ease in the rest of the Enterprize* ; I shall take the Liberty, therefore, to consider the Army as landed, and the Stores, &c. secured within the Walls of that Fort.

I shall likewise take Leave to strip them of that Part of their Defence, which arises from, (I think, a Sort of Prevarication, but certainly) a Misrepresentation of the Words of their Instructions. They are eternally telling us of the great Change between the State of Affairs in which they were to act, and the State in which they were sent out, arising from Delays of various Kinds, by which an Alarm was spread, and the Possibility of a *Surprise* was prevented, and they were to act only by Way of Surprise. Who told them so ? Their Instructions, I am sure, held no such Language. *To attack, and by a vigorous Impression, force,* *Enq.* p. 78. These were the Instructions. If I order a Man to force into a Place, does it imply, that if he can't steal into it, he need not attempt it. He may try that Method first, if he pleases. It is safer for himself ; but if he can't do that, is he to decline every other Attempt ? Where, then, is the Force which he is to use ?

If the Instructions, therefore, convey no such Ideas as confine the Operations of the Troops to a Surprise only, is there any Thing in the Hints of Advice given by Sir *John Ligonier*, whose Opinions, founded on such consummate Experience, the General in Chief thought would be a Justification to any Officer. Read the Paper as it stands together, *Enq.* p. 20th, 21st, 22d. He says, indeed, that it would perhaps be best, if the Enemy *could be surprised* ; but a *bold Attack, after having secured a Place of Retreat, secured Guides on the Spot, and thoroughly reconnoitred, and fixed upon the fittest Places,* is what is recommended and enlarged upon. But the Generals, it seems, did not secure the

the Place of Retreat because they would not attack; and they did not attack, because they had not secured a Place of Retreat. As to the other Measures advised, the getting Guides on the Spot, reconnoitring, and trying to find out fit Places to attack, all these they omitted, for they never were on the Spot. Of all the Hints, therefore, given by that consummate General, Sir *John Ligonier*, not one was carried into Execution.

As to the State of the *French* Troops which were at *Rockefort*, I have already considered that Point, and therefore need add little to it now. The utmost which the Generals pretend to have imagined, amounts to no more than this: Sir *John Mordaunt* supposes, p. 27, that there must have been a good Garrison, besides Workmen in the Docks, and the Crews of the Ships in the River. General *Conway*, p. 39, from general Reasoning, and from Intelligence, was persuaded there must be a considerable Number of Men at *Rockefort*: And General *Cornwallis* does not so much as mention any Difficulty to be feared from the Enemies Troops, but puts the whole on that of Landing, and the having no Retreat or Communication with the Ships secured. Thus, then, the Terrors, which you in your Performance endeavoured to magnify, of the great Opposition to be expected from the Enemies Troops not only vanish, but it appears, that the Generals themselves never adopted those Terrors, for they had no credible Intelligence contradicting the Accounts received at home: and one supposes only a good Garrison, and the other a considerable Number of Men in *Rockefort*.

Being Masters then of *Fouras*, and no Body of Troops then in the Field to oppose them, they could at least have marched to reconnoitre, and inspect, with their own Eyes, the Nature of the Fortifications about *Rockefort*. And this they might have done without Danger to their Troops, and without the Loss of a single

a single Soldier. Had they found by their own Observation, and by incontrovertable Testimony, that the Fortifications of the Place so far and so totally varied, from the Accounts given of them, as to make the Success, by Assault, impossible, or, in a very high Degree, improbable; then, and not till then, would they have been justified in returning to their Ships; for then they would have performed their Orders; *They would have attempted as far as was found practicable.* But Posterity will hardly believe that three *English* Generals, of noble Blood, high in their Master's Favour, and high in Reputation, who were sent with a powerful Armada, and a Body of near 10,000 *British* Troops under their Command, upon an Enterprize of the greatest Importance to their Country, and upon which the Eyes, not only of their Countrymen, but all *Europe*, were turned with eager Expectation, could consent to come back again, even *without an Attempt to reconnoitre*, leaving behind them, if not their own Honour, yet certainly the Honour of their Country; because, in a Council of War held aboard their Ships, there appeared a Contrariety of Evidence, whether the Ditch about the Town of *Rochefort*, which was supposed at their first setting out to be dry, was, in Reality, a dry or a wet Ditch: Yet, Party and Prejudice apart, is not this a true State of the Case? Supposing the Troops in Possession of *Fouras*, which they might so easily have been, what other Difficulty do the Generals pretend to suggest, besides the wet Ditch.

I have scarce Patience enough to argue with them upon the Probability of this Point one way or the other; yet, as I have undertaken an irksome Task, I will go thro' with it. Sir *John Mordaunt* in his Narrative delivered into the Board, is very short and not very particular in the Account of what he had heard was the State of the Fortifications. The first Part relates to the open Part of the Town, where there was Rampart for sixty Yards in Length; this Sir *John* supposes must have been

been fortified with an Entrenchment, as by Thierry's Account there was a Palisade, and a Trench might be thrown up in 24 Hours Time, to which the Ships in the River would be better Flankers than a Bastion. But did Sir John go to Rochefort, in order to hear this Evidence from Thierry, and to examine his Plans? Surely he might have done that at home. Yet he does not suggest one Syllable of new Intelligence gained on this Head since his Arrival on the Coast; but speaks only of his own Supposition, in which, however, he was mistaken. The rest of the Circumference of the Town was generally proved, he says, (but it does not appear by whom) to be strong and high; but I should have been glad to have seen the Depositions of those Witnesses who proved this; because when they spoke of the general Parts being strong and high; it is natural to suppose they were asked some few Questions as to those particular Parts which were not strong and high; yet I am not sure they were asked such Questions; and therefore I cannot but again lament the total Suppression of the Evidence given to the Council of War.

As to the State of the Ditch, two Witnesses declared they had seen it full of Water, by Means of Sluices in the Town. When Sir John is interrogated on these Points, by the Board, he says, that there was a Contradiction in the Evidence given to the Council of War; and that some of the Prisoners contradicted, and some confirmed Col. Clerk's Account.

As to the first Part of the Fortification, (I mean the open Parts near the River) it appears, from thence, how much the Generals were out in their Reasoning; that the long Alarm upon the Coast; the particular Expectation of a Visit in those Parts; the Presence of a Marechal of France, and the great Alertness, Wisdom, and Sagacity of the People, had put every Thing into such a Posture of Defence as might defy an Attack. It appears how much better that Officer reasoned, who said, *We should never take it for granted*
C *that.*

that all is done which ought to be done, even in France. *Bonneau*, the Fisherman, recommended to *Col. Clarke*, as a knowing sensible Fellow, by *Capt. Hamilton*, General *Conway*'s Aid de Camp, assured him, in the Presence of *Col. Wolfe*, and several other Persons, that upon the 21st of that very Month, when our Fleet was on the Coast, that very Spot remained as open, and as unfortified, as it was when *Col. Clarke* first saw it in the Year 1754. *Enq.* p. 52. But this, tho' reported to the General, he would not believe; he would not believe a Fisherman in the Affair of a Fortification, because he was not an Engineer; and yet he would not believe the Engineer of the Fort of *Aix*, who said the Ditch was dry, and the Town open, because he was an Engineer.

It seems to me to be one of the most unhappy Omens for this Country, that the French have gained such an Ascendency over the Minds of our military People, as to be considered by them in the Light of superior Beings, to which our lesser Geniuses dare not presume to look up. "After the several Intelligences we had received, says the General, *Enq.* p. 14, that the *French* expected an Invasion on this Part of the Coast, and were not alarmed, *it was impossible to imagine* that a Place like *Rockefort*, the second certainly in Importance on the whole Coast, should, after such Warnings be totally neglected." And yet it was so totally neglected, that an Intrenchment, which might have been thrown up with ease, and planted with Batteries to defend *an open Entrance into the Town, sixty Yards wide*, was not thrown up, even after our Ships had been on that very Coast. But how astonished will our Generals be when they are told that this is not the first Time that there has been this Neglect at *Rockefort*. There has been no Alteration in the Fortifications of that Place these 70 Years.

The *French* considered it as an open Town, so said the Engineer of *Aix* to Colonel *Clarke*. And yet the Expedition against *Port l' Orient*, might have alarmed

alarmed the *French* for *Rochefort* so far, at least, as to throw an Entrenchment round it, if that would have been sufficient to secure it against an Assault. It may be, and indeed it was astonishing to think, that a Place so important as *Rochefort* should have been no better secured. But for what a Length of Time did the principal Dock-yards of *England* lay exposed not only to be destroyed by a great Force, but to be burnt by the Crews of two, or three Privateers. But there are Blunders and Oversights in all Governments, for which a prudent and active Adversary lies in Wait to take his Advantage. For the future the *French* will take Care of *Rochefort* : Our Oversights we are unhappily taught to correct, by severe Losses, while the *French* are taught to correct their Blunders by our superior Blunders.

As to the Ditch, if the concurrent Evidence of Colonel *Clarke*, and the *French* Engineer, that it was a dry one, had been out of the Question, the contradictory Evidence given before the Council of War, might have been cleared up from the very Situation of the Place : It was a Maxim of one of the greatest *French* Generals, and a *French* Maxim will have Weight with our *English* Generals, that one should never suppose a Ditch to be full of Water till somebody, we can depend upon, has dipped in his Finger and tasted it ; yet that *French* General would scarce have taken the Trouble of sending to search if there was Water in a Ditch which lay on the Side of a Hill. It is impossible without Sluices, which must be repeated as often as the Level of the Ground varies, *Cela ne pourroit etre a cause de l'inégalité du terrain*, was what might have occurred to an *English* General, as well as to a *French* Engineer. Even if there had been Sluices, to demolish them was not the Work of a battering Train. A Couple of Field Pieces would blow up a Sluice in Half an Hour, and then where would be the wet Ditch.

I have heard too another Thing, and I am well founded in asserting it. There was a certain Monsieur *Bonneville*, a *Volontier*, who went under the Protection of one of our Generals in this Expedition. He had been about Eight or Nine Years since through *Rochefort*, and great Strefs was laid in the Council of War on the Evidence that he gave, that *to the best of his Recollection*, there was then Water in the Ditch : This Evidence, though from such long Memory, was eagerly caught at ; but a very deaf Ear was turned to the Undertaking, with which he accompanied his Evidence, that *even tho' there should be Water, he would, by a Method which he explained, make that Ditch practicable in Two or Three different Places in the Space of a few Minutes, and wide enough for a Battalion to march in Front. That the Materials for this were in their Power, and that the Thing was no chimerical Project, since it had been done by Marshal Lowendhal the last War in Two several Instances, where he himself was present and in Service.* But this it seems was too dangerous.

Whoever is acquainted with the Characters of the Generals, concerned in this Expedition, will acquit them of the Imputation of personal Cowardice : Far be it from me to impute it : I declare I would not attempt to insinuate it ; they have never indeed commanded before, but they have served, and served with Spirit and Gallantry ; their Conduct therefore, on this Occasion, is more mysterious and astonishing. Of the whole which was their peculiar Department, have they, or did they attempt to execute a single Part ? The Fort of *Aix* was taken, not by the Troops, but by Capt. *Howe* ; if the Fleet would have taken *Fouras* likewise, they were at full Liberty to do it, and if they could have sailed up to *Rochefort*, and have taken that too, it does not appear that the Generals would have opposed it. But neither does it appear that they would have risqu'd their Soldiers even from *Fouras*,
for

for if they once got out of the Ships, who can tell whether they could get back again. Is it not astonishing that when Vice-Admiral *Knowles* had reported the Impracticability of taking it by Sea ; the Generals should first lay aside all Thoughts of prosecuting the whole Plan, before they ever asked whether this *necessary* Place could be taken *without* the Assistance of Ships. When they came to reconnoitre they found how practicable it was, so practicable, so little hazardous, that they resolved to attack it meerly *for the Sake of employing the Soldiers*, *Enq.* p. 109. without intending to draw any other Effect from it.

It is no Fault in a General to be cautious how he exposes his Troops ; it is his Duty not to expose them wantonly and rashly : But Troops must serve when the Occasions of the State demand it, and sometimes they must go upon hard Service : The Question was not whether *Rochefort* could be taken without Loss ; but whether *Rochefort* could be taken. A Ditch, even a wet one, a Wall, an Intrenchment, or a Battery of Cannon do not make the Places they defend impregnable. They are taken every Day, and taken by Escalade and Assault. Marechal *Lowendahl* took, by Assault, several Fortifications, surrounded by wet Ditches, last War ; yet not by Surprise. Fort St. *Philip* was taken by Assault, without a Breach, tho' defended by a stronger Garrison than was within the Ramparts of *Rochefort* : If it had not been so taken, it never could have been taken ; and yet that Attack was much more desperate, than there was any Appearance to suspect that on *Rochefort* would have been. Are not Entrenchments, even the strongest, and best defended, continually forced ? And did not the *French*, in the only Stop they received in the Dominions of *Hanover*, march up a steep Hill, into the Mouths of a Battery of Cannon, and take it ? All these Services must be performed, and they can be performed, but still, (I agree) with Loss. It would be happy if we

could carry on War without shedding Christian Blood ; but Mankind is not yet sufficiently civilized to adopt such Methods. “ In all doubtful, dangerous military Attempts, the Advantages, that may accrue from Success, ought to be weighed against the Damage and Misfortunes which may be the Consequences of a Repulse.” So says Sir John Ligonier, *Enq.* p. 21. in his Advice to Sir John Mordaunt. Our forcing, by a vigorous Impression, *Rochefort*, and seizing the Ships and Naval Stores, burning the Docks, destroying the Foundery and Cannon, and thereby crippling the *French* Navy, perhaps for the rest of this War, were such Advantages as this Country, in its present Circumstances, might, in Prudence, purchase, even with the Lives of some of its Soldiers, and might thereby have saved the Lives of many of its Subjects.

In p. 41. of your own Work, you are pleased to represent the Resolution to land, on the 28th, for the Attack of *Fort Fouras*, as an *Excess of Zeal to carry on the Enterprize, and a Perseverance in a Plan which was found impracticable* : But you have forgot that the Generals themselves claim no such Merit, nor do they even pretend that this was attempted with a View still to proceed against *Rochefort* ; Quite the contrary. The General himself, *Enq.* p. 109. represents it as something to employ the Troops before they went Home, while the Fortifications of *Aix* was blowing up, but being prevented from landing that Night, and the Fleet being ready the next Morning, they did not think it worth while to stay another Day. They were so determined by the contradictory Evidence given at the Council of War, and so fixed in their Resolution, in no Situation to attack *Rochefort*, that it was not worth while to detain the Fleet a Day, in order to take a Place, which if the Seamen had taken at first, the General says, the rest of the *Enterprize* would have been easy, and from whence they might,

might, with Safety, have informed their own Eyes of the exact Situation of the Town.

You are pleased to express an high Contempt of the *Idea* of giving any Blow to *France*, not only in any Part of the Land Frontiers, but of that immense Tract of Land which spreads for so great an Extent through different Seas, and you shelter yourself under one Axiom of *Schomberg*, "That attacking *France* in *France*, was taking a Bull by the Horns." And another of the Great *Victor Amadeus* of *Savoy*, "That he knew a thousand Ways into *France*, but none out of it."

This is another Instance of what I have before lamented, as an unhappy Omen to this Country, that even great Statesmen can adopt the Maxim, that the Wisdom and Power of *France* renders her invulnerable. Yet I did not expect that you, of all Men living, would have endeavoured to expose the Absurdity of taking the Bull by the Horns; you who have been, who continue to be the grand Advocate for Land Operations, and for sending the Force of this Island upon the Continent. I will agree, indeed, that neither in the last War, nor perhaps in the present, was there much Probability that our Troops should enter *France*. So much the worse for us. But do you make no Difference between attacking such a Barrier as *France* has towards *Flanders*, or even attacking it from the Side of *Italy*, and the sending a superior Fleet to storm at once a Place situated on the Coast which the Generals were not instructed to hold and maintain, but to destroy, and then go on Board their Ships? The Way back, if the Fleet continued superior, was just as easy as the Way thither.

But tho' I differ from you in that Opinion, we agree exactly in another, which you advance; I mean the great Importance of *Cape Breton*, and the Blow which *France* would receive in the Loss of it; yet

if, as you observe justly, it would not *now be a Folly to be surpris'd at any Thing*, I should have been a little surpris'd to hear the Neglect of that Object charged as an Imputation on the Minister, whom you and *yours* have so often ridiculed, as *America-mad*. Must I really ask the Question? Was that great Object forgot? Has the War in *America* in general, or a Plan of Attack on that Place in particular, been neglected by him; or was it his Scramble for Power? Was it his Junto, or his Party Cabal that suspended or weakened the Operation? Look back a few Months. When was the Attack of that Place projected? And when was the Armament fitted out and prepared for the Execution? Was it not in that very Hour when you and yours were with so much Decency and Humanity ridiculing a Bed-ridden Minister, and representing him to be as impotent in his mental Faculties as he was in his bodily State? Was not that Armament prepared by the then Board of Admiralty, with an Expedition that shewed they were no Strangers to Business, how much soever they might be ridiculed as Novices in Office? Was it not ready to sail Six Weeks sooner than any Armament could be sent from the Ports of *France*, notwithstanding the utmost Exertions of that wise and alert People? Was it not sufficient for the Service, and infinitely superior to any Thing which at that Time could oppose it in *America*? When by a Series of adverse Winds, the Departure of that Armament had been delayed so many Weeks, and till the *French* Fleets were ready to put to Sea, was there not a Reinforcement of Six Capital Ships *ordered* by that Admiralty, to be added to those originally destined to that Service, and which were to follow them as soon as possible? I affirm that there was. How that Reinforcement came to be applied to other Purposes, you best can tell, since it was thro' your Scramble for Power, thro' your Junto, thro' your Party Cabal, that a Dismission was given in that critical Conjunction to that Board
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of Admiralty, and the Minister with whom it was connected. The succeeding Board happened to be of a different Opinion from the preceding one, and the Reinforcement destined for the Attack of *Louisbourg* was (I do not say perverted, but) converted to other Purposes. To *Cruise upon the Trade of France*, was, by that Board, thought the best Method of destroying the Enemy, and instead of a Chimerical Attack upon *Louisbourg* or *Rochefort*, the Fleet of *England* was immediately exerted in what the *French* call the piratical Kind of War: A Kind of War, which I suppose, is the fittest for the Fleet of *England*, because the *French* ridicule it the most; and sure I am, that our maritime Officers not only applaud it the most, but seem of late Years to have turned their Thoughts to little else.

As soon as the six Weeks Admiralty retired, and gave way to the present Board, and the present Minister was ordered to resume the Functions of that Office, which not a Man in *England* dared to fill after him, the *American* System resumed its Vigour. Such Ships as could be collected, tho' not equal, either in Strength or Numbers, to what had been originally destined to that Service, were immediately sent to reinforce those at *Hallifax*; and I do again affirm, and am prepared to prove, that, except a very short time, in which the Squadron of Mr. *Holbourne* was, by the beforementioned Accidents, by a single Ship, perhaps, inferior to the *French*, he had under his Command, during the whole Summer, a Fleet superior to any Thing the *French* had at *Louisbourg*, or could, by any Means whatever, bring there, whether you consider the Number of Line of Battle Ships, the Number of Men on Board, the Number of Guns, or the Weight of their Metal; and yet almost the whole Maritime Force of *France*, so far as it could be manned, was, by Stratagem, collected there. Was it then so very absurd and romantic, that when their
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Maritime Force was drawn away to *America*, and their Land Forces engaged in *Germany*, the reserved Strength of this Country should be exerted in attempting a Blow so very decisive as the taking of *Roche-fort* would have been? Why it miscarried, to this Moment, I can hardly guess; but sure I am, it was not thro' the Impracticability of it.

I have now, Sir, gone through the Consideration of your whole Performance, and if you are not tired with reading, I confess I am heartily tired with writing. I have endeavoured to keep as close as possible to the Subject, and, tho' often tempted, I have indulged few Sallies of my Pen: If now and then you should have found a little Deviation, a little Playfulness of Imagination, forgive it. 'Tis but a Copy of my Countenance; 'tis but a forced Smile that covers a bleeding Heart: A Heart broken and bleeding for the Distress, for the Disgrace of this Country. Where, alas! can we look, whither can we direct our Hopes? Under which of those dark Clouds that surround, and seem ready to burst upon us, can we flatter ourselves there is a Ray of Light that will break forth? To what Purpose is it that we boast our Trade, our Wealth, and our Credit? We are but so many Sheep, whose Carcases tempt the Wolves to devour us. Where is the Glory of the *British* Name; where are the Terrors that used to accompany our Fleets and Armies? The Treasures of the Country are poured forth in vain by an united and willing People. Our Enemies are become invulnerable, and every Blow our Ministers meditate, impracticable. In *Germany* their Ravages are not stopped for a single Hour, for there were not so many Men in the *German* as in the *French* Army, therefore to check their Progress is Impracticable. In *America*, where our Troops are at least double to those of the Enemy, to check their Progress is equally Impracticable. To destroy their Docks at *Roche-fort*,

fort, a Town considered in *France* as an open Town; without Bastions, without Fortifications, without a Wall for its Defence, is Impracticable; for 'tis most certain there was a Ditch, and somebody said there was Water in it.

Such is the Sum total of the present Account of our military Operations, and can we look forward with a better Prospect? As to our Fleet, we have indeed been our own Undoers, and have killed the pampered Child with Kindness. We have destroyed the Principle which was the Source of our Glory. We have misguided the Ambition of our Seamen; we have tempted them with Wealth instead of Reputation; and we have substituted Avarice to Honour. We have at this Hour many who would make brave and excellent Corsairs, and I hope that in the long List we have two or three good Admirals.

As to the Army, the Soldiers are still brave, and, I am persuaded, will fight, whenever their Commanders will lead them on; there is some Comfort in that. But what are the Commanders? Read over the List of General Officers. I am sure you will agree with me, that those who were pick'd out as *chosen Men* to command the Expedition against *Rochefort*, at that time stood among the first for Character and Reputation. From their Conduct on this Occasion, we may judge what we are to expect for the future.

But alas! the Call, the Enthusiastic Call of Glory and Honour, is heard no more among us; we are grown a solid and wise People; we have substituted Realities to Chimæras, and we seek after Essentials rather than empty, popular Applause. *Populus me sibi lat, at mihi Plaudo*. Who is there, in this enlightened Day, who has not Courage enough to withstand popular Clamour? No Wonder! What does a Man get by being popular, and who is there that thinks any farther than how he can get. Is he a Soldier, of Family perhaps, of Rank, of P——y Connections, and fostered

fostered in the Bosom of some powerful Faction. Shall such a Man expose himself uncalled, uncommissioned by his Faction? Shall he brave Danger in order to serve only his Country, and at the same time, perhaps, increase the Reputation of some absurd chimerical Beggar of a Minister, who is Fool enough to think his Country worth serving under the most unpleasant Circumstances, and in the most dangerous Conjunctions. Why should he? His Faction will be powerful enough to secure his future Preferment: They will stand between him and Danger: they will rescue him from Punishment, they will rescue him from the Resentment of his S——. They will rescue him from every thing but DISHONOUR.

S I R,

I am yours, &c.

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POSTSCRIPT.

THOUGH I have not in the Course of this Letter affected a Candour more than is common to those who engage in political Disputes, yet the Reader will think it extraordinary that I have not availed myself of the Intelligence lately brought from *Rochelle* and *Rochfort* by the Captain of the Transport Vessel, who was a Prisoner in that Country at the Time our Armament came to that Coast. The Truth is, I disdained to prejudice the Mind of the Reader by a Testimony of that Sort, and I determined that he should judge of the Conduct of the Generals in this Expedition, from the same Evidence on which they might be supposed to act. But as his Opinion of the Generals, and their Conduct, is by this Time formed, it is a Debt due to Truth, and to the Publick to say (what is already well known to most of the Merchants of the City of *London*) that at the Time our Fleet was at the Isle of *Aix*, the whole Force which the Enemy had on that Coast consisted of
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a Battalion of regular Troops in the *Isle of Rhe*, another in *Oleron*, a *Swiss* Battalion at *Rochelle*, and one Regiment of Regulars, and one of Militia at *Rochefort*. That the *Prudente*, a *French* Ship of 74 Guns, with all her Cannon and Stores, &c. on Board, escaped our Fleet, by running up to *Rochefort*, through that very Channel which was not deep enough for an *English* Long Boat, and that the Confection on the Coast was not to be expressed, it being understood that in the Course of a few Days, both *Rochefort* and *Rochelle* would necessarily fall into the Hands of the *English*, there being no Possibility to reinforce them 'till the Household Troops could arrive from *Ver-sailles*.



F I N I S.